

THE ISLANDS OF ISCHIA & CAPRI



ITINERARY:

The islands of Ischia and Capri, in the Bay of Naples, have been holiday destinations since Roman times. On our new **8 days / 7 nights** trip we spend 4 nights on the larger Ischia and 3 nights in Capri. Because of their distinct geologies the islands are very different in character. Ischia is volcanic, has geothermal hot springs, fertile soils, 6 towns and many hamlets. Capri is an extension of the Sorrento peninsula's high limestone cliffs, with steep drops, impossibly perched buildings and only 2 towns. Both islands offer great walking and sightseeing away from the day trippers. From Naples Airport a taxi ride takes one to Molo Beverello for the hydrofoil service (More frequent & quicker than the ferry).

Day 1

We meet at Hotel La Madonnina, our 21 room Ischia hotel (4 nights; sea-facing rooms). It is located on the cliffs, has its own beach and spa, and is within walking distance of Casamicciola, one of Ischia's 6 town (Should you require assistance with transfers and sea crossings we are happy to help and advise).

The ancient Greeks, who enigmatically referred to the island as 'Pithekoussai', literally meaning 'the Place of Monkeys' but more likely referring to early pottery production, established their first Italian trading post here in BC 775. Once they outgrew the island they moved to the mainland and founded Cumae and then Naples. Time permitting we shall take a stroll to the town in order to get our bearings.

Day 2

Today we explore the picturesque lanes of Ischia town and Porto d'Ischia on the island's east coast. We visit the huge

Aragonese castle built on a rocky islet connected to the main island by a walkway. Lunch will be in a local trattoria.

Day 3

We head to the island's north west coast, first to visit the small but fascinating Archaeological Museum of Pithecusae, which displays the so called 'Nestor's cup', found locally and decorated with one of the earliest known inscriptions in the Greek language and the first to reference Homer. We then travel to the famous gardens of La Mortella. This spectacular subtropical and Mediterranean garden was commissioned in 1956 by Susana Walton, Argentinian wife of composer Sir William Walton. The landscape artist Russell Page designed it to meld with the steep volcanic landscape.

We continue to picturesque Forio, the largest of the island's 6 towns. Weather permitting we may even get to have a swim at one of the island's thermal beaches, where hot water comes through the sand.



Day 4

Today we head higher onto the slopes of Monte Epomeo, the volcano that dominates the island, for a walk in the woods of the Bosco della Maddalena. The walk is on a circular contour, away from any building, and in places, offers stunning views over the nearby island of Procida and the mainland coast. Once done we head for the mountain hamlet of Cretaio to lunch at a renowned family run trattoria that specialises in Ischia specialties (The actor Stanley Tucci filmed here for an episode of his excellent series on Italian cuisine).

Day 5

After a leisurely breakfast we catch a mid morning ferry for the 45 minutes crossing to Capri. On arrival the island may feel overrun with tourists but most are day trippers and tend to concentrate around the main Piazza. Hotel Canasta (3 nights), our rather elegant family-run boutique accommodation, is an oasis of peace only a few minutes walk from the centre. The owners also run a famous trattoria located nearby where we shall dine at least one evening. Capri is criss-crossed by many paths and 'Mulattiere' and thus is an excellent place to walk with stunning views over the high coastline. Later we stroll through the pretty centre of Capri town, getting our bearings and visiting the Certosa di St. Giacomo and Giardini di Augusto.

Day 6

This morning we head on foot through quiet neighbourhoods full of fine villas and locals' homes to Monte Tiberio, at the very north eastern point of the island, where we visit the archeological site of Villa Jovis. The historian Tacitus refers to this as Emperor Tiberius' largest of the 12 villas he had constructed on Capri. Apparently, the main motivations for Tiberius's move from Rome to Capri were his wariness of the political manoeuvring in Rome and a lingering fear of assassination. It is not only a superb example of a 1st C AD Roman imperial villa but also served as the seat of government as Tiberius spent most of the last 10 years of his life here.

We then stroll to the lovely Villa Lysis, built by industrialist and poet Jacques d'Adelswärd-Fersen in 1905. "Dedicated to the youth of love", it was Fersen's self-chosen exile from France after a sex scandal involving Parisian schoolboys and nude tableaux vivants. The views from the villa's secluded location, perched high above the cliffs overlooking Marina Grande, are simply stunning.

Day 7

We head up to Anacapri, the second town on the island, set high up and surrounded by gently sloping, terraced gardens. Here we visit Villa San Michele, the life's work of the Swedish physician and author Axel Munthe (1857–1949). It is surrounded by an impressive garden with views over the sea and Punta della Campanella, the meeting point of the Sorrento and Amalfi coasts. Axel Munthe recounts the story of his life and the creation of the villa in 'The Story of San Michele' (1929). It became one of the first international bestsellers in modern times.

In the afternoon there is the chance to do some more lovely walking, this time along the SE coast. First along residential neighbourhoods to Belvedere di Tragara, where one can see the 'Faraglioni', Capri's iconic sea stacks and then along a coastal path away from built up areas to Maternania and the view point over the 'Arco Naturale'. Conversely one can just chill, stroll the lanes of Capri town, sit in the famous Piazzetta watching the world go by.

Day 8

Departure day. We shall assist you in organising crossings and airport transfers (Suggest not booking morning flights to give yourself time), or maybe you will opt to stay on in Naples for a night or two.



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